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Presidential Briefing Document

INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

SEPTEMBER 30, 1947

UNIDENTIFIED AIRCRAFT SIGHTINGS OVER THE UNITED STATES

**PREPARED BY SPECIAL STUDIES AND EVALUATION
STATE-WAR-NAVY COORDINATING COMMITTEE
AND
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY**

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Page 1 of 5

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF INFORMATION

As of May of this year there have been a number of unidentified aircraft sightings recorded by military intelligence sources over the continental United States, its territories and possessions that have been unaccounted for. These sightings have been reported by qualified military and civilian pilots, responsible ground observers and ordinary citizens which cannot be disputed by our defense intelligence organizations. Until June 26 these sightings were discarded as symptoms of over zealous reaction due to the publicity arising from the suspected Soviet rocket testing over Sweden and some parts of Europe of the previous summer. During the month of July of this year numerous sightings of unidentified aerial objects over our top secret proving ground and atomic weapons storage facilities in New Mexico prompted an immediate investigation by military and AEC security officials. So far, no indication of hostile intent has been observed nor have we sustained any attack on our soil. Elements of the Air Force and Army technical intelligence commands have given serious attention to the possibility that some foreign power has developed advanced aerial capabilities such as high speed, high maneuverability and unconventional propulsion technology that is outside the scope of our science. There is speculative talk among concerned air intelligence experts that these objects may be of interplanetary origin, but as of to date no physical evidence in the form of crashed or captured remains of these objects has come into our possession that would warrant such conclusion. Since June the offices of the Air Materiel Command has undertaken the responsibility of collection and analysis of the phenomenon as part of a joint military and AEC intelligence project to determine any and all specifics related to the problem.

ESTIMATES OF SOVIET CAPABILITIES

The best estimates obtained to date suggest that Soviet air power and rocket research based on all intelligence we have still lags far behind that of our force strength in long range bombers and guided missile development. Damage sustained by Germany's invasion and destruction of the country's manufacturing infrastructure during the war has severely limited what resources exist to engage in such bravado. If the Soviets could develop in such rapid pace an advanced long range aircraft or missile the probability of venturing into our air space with such numbers without some of the reported objects running out of fuel and crashing is considered very remote. Such intrusions would surely be taken as an act of war by the military and retaliatory measures by our government would be most apparent by both. We are though convinced that Soviet atomic research may be underway and captured German scientists along with sufficient material recovered by the Soviet military could be utilized for improving their military power base if sufficient quantities were acquired. We do know that the Soviets along with British, French, and Canadian technical inspection teams did acquire experimental aircraft and aerial weapons after Germany's capitulation and secret research is being performed in these countries based on these technologies. In our informed opinion the sighting reports are not of Soviet origin and we wish to emphasize that even if the Soviets could be engaged in aerial reconnaissance of our restricted air space covering vast distances and the reported

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Page 2 of 5

it is highly improbable in light of the obvious implications that the Soviets would risk losing a technical advantage by openly disclosing what they have achieved in long range aircraft or missile development in such a cavalier fashion.

ESTIMATE OF DOMESTIC CAPABILITIES

A comprehensive survey of all experimental aircraft and guided missile research projects currently underway in the United States was conducted to determine if any of the reported objects may have been the result of classified aeronautical research tests within the time frame of the reports. Detailed summaries of all aircraft and missile projects that could have accounted for a number of sightings over our White Sands Proving Ground, Fort Bliss Gunnery Range, Los Alamos Laboratories and supporting air fields reveals no project capable of the flight characteristics associated with these objects. We contacted officials at NACA, NEPA, AEC, and of the armed forces responsible for overseeing the existing aeronautical research projects and have concluded that none of the reported objects were remotely connected. It is possible that with current air capabilities of the military that some of the reported sightings may have been misinterpreted for so-called "Flying Saucers" or "Flying Disks" especially in light of the fact that we do have classified weapons tests currently in progress in some states and for security reasons could not be divulged publicly. We have also considered other possible sources for the reported sightings such as weather balloons, errant aircraft, celestial phenomenon, aircraft observed under unusual atmospheric conditions, flying debris, and migratory birds. It is also possible with current technological understanding in civil aeronautical concepts that some of the sightings may be due to private enterprises not known to the public.

ESTIMATE OF THE SITUATION

Extracts collected from military intelligence reports to date indicate the following situation as it exists.

- a. Roughly 20% of all domestic sightings remain unexplained.
- b. There have been no loss to our aircraft in pursuing the unidentified aircraft.
- c. There have been no loss to our ground defenses.
- d. There have been no loss to our naval forces.
- e. There has been no breach of security in our atomic weapons program.
- f. There have been no reported injuries to the civilian population.
- g. Public alarm is minimal.
- h. Foreign espionage in our defense projects is not apparent.
- i. Domestic and foreign press coverage is at low ebb.
- j. Our air defense is at a high state of readiness for possible contingencies.
- k. Our military and civilian defense intelligence agencies are aware of the problem.

In formulating information on unidentified aircraft sightings the Air Force in cooperation with the FBI and the CIA have produced a working hypothesis that may

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Page 3 of 5

provide solvable solutions and contingency plans should the phenomenon prove to be non-terrestrial in nature.

The reported objects may be remote controlled reconnaissance drones of a foreign power. First publicized reports surfaced in the northwest United States and CIA believes they may have been experimental aircraft based in Canada. If such eventually proves to be the case, then the United States would have to be advised by the Canadian Government of such intrusions in the future. CIA believes this is the most plausible hypothesis.

The reported objects may be errant radar targets suspended by balloon trains released by military weather service units located on or near high security installations for radiation monitoring of atomic weapons tests from the Pacific proving grounds.

The reported objects may be classified U.S. aircraft and as such requires absolute security.

The reported objects may be classified weapons tests.

The reported objects may be jettisoned warheads of classified guided missile tests.

A second solution devised for this estimate may be found in the experimental work of test flying captured German flying wings originating out of air fields in New Mexico or California and the east coast.

A third solution, one that is not considered as the best for this estimate may present itself voluntarily in a large population center of the United States and would require an extremely coordinated action on the part of the military. There is always the possibility that one or more of these objects may land in full view of the public. We cannot rule out this possibility and may present political problems for the current administration. We draw on the 1938 radio adaptation of H.G. Wells's War of the Worlds panic as one example of public alarm which clogged defense communications temporarily. In our view such an incident could trigger nation-wide panic and invite aggressive actions by the Soviets at a time when our defense communications are most needed for open channels with our overseas commands.

ESTIMATES OF INTERPLANETARY CAPABILITIES

The best intelligence we have on the capabilities of a presumed interplanetary power possibly behind unidentified aircraft is at best rudimentary and lacks specific information deemed useful for presenting a complete picture of intent and weapons capability. What we do know is enumerated below based on everything collected by our intelligence.

1. They appear to be circular or wing-shaped aircraft with light reflecting surfaces.
2. They can achieve tremendous bursts of speed and are very maneuverable and can

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Page 4 of 5

out fly anything we have in the air.

3. They appear as large as man-made aircraft compared with our largest bomber.
4. They can appear to stall in mid-air and accelerate to super-sonic speeds in an instant.
5. Some reports state that they are solid objects that create holes in cloud formations and produce loud roars when accelerating.
6. Some reports state that they seem to vanish into thin air and reappear instantly.
7. They may be piloted aircraft or remote controlled.
8. Some reports indicate that the objects are associated with brilliant fireballs that enter our atmosphere and seemingly explode leaving no trace materials.
9. They appear evasive when approached by our aircraft.
10. No radio contact has been made with the objects.
11. Ground observers have been able to track by radar and by optical means groups and formations numbering between three to twelve at a time.
12. Some civilian and military pilots have reported instrument and engine failure when approaching too close to these objects.
13. Their appearance over military and civilian defense installations may fall into a reconnaissance pattern but is not recognizable at this time.
14. There is speculation that some form of nuclear propulsion may be evident in some of the reported sightings though the prevailing opinion suggests that these objects are propelled by a solid rocket motor or gas propellant.

Though the frequency of sightings particularly between June and July are consistent with conventional aerial reconnaissance operations given the excellent visibility over some strategic sites in the southwest with little cloud cover to obscure photography to record storage depots, airstrips, parked aircraft, anti aircraft batteries and locations of atomic weapons manufacturing plants. As of to date, no clear pattern has been observed by the sightings since reports are sporadic and random and leaves our intelligence with no clear picture of what may be developing at present. A special study written for the Air Force on the possible utilization of earth orbiting satellites concluded that photographic information of any land mass could yield considerable intelligence regarding a country's manufacturing and transportation capability and disclose the locations of its defense establishments. It is possible that some foreign power has placed artificial satellites about our planet and is utilizing remote controlled reconnaissance drones for this purpose.

A recent evaluation by the U.S. Air Force Air Materiel Command has been forwarded to Headquarters, Air Force which strongly urges a classified code name intelligence project be implemented for the forwarding of all essential elements of information and periodic reports be submitted to scientists of the Armed Forces, the Atomic Energy Commission and other concerned defense agencies for opinions and feed back for a better understanding of the nature of the phenomenon. Communication intelligence agencies have issued specific directives to all concerned reporting channels to forward any

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Page 5 of 5

information relative to unidentified aircraft sightings immediately for further evaluation by the Air Force and CIA.

CONCLUSIONS

Pending any further developments along these lines of discussion it is our belief that what we are up against is controlled by intelligent operators who for the most part seem particularly interested in our atomic weapons facilities, nuclear material producing plants, locations of our air defenses, and disposition of our defense industry. We could speculate further that this situation may have a connection to the first sighting reports recorded by our air forces during the war and last year's rocket scare but we have little in the way of hard proof to establish this. What we do know is that these objects are real and not illusionary. We still hold out to the possibility that the Soviets may have pulled off a brilliant aerial reconnaissance operation of our country. This is remarkable, if true, given the fact that we have so far been unsuccessful in accomplishing this same feat over the Soviet Union.

I want the Director of NSA to have this for future reference.

October 24, 1952

Harry S. Truman

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